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Fulbright's Broad View

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America is greatly disturbed by the arguments going on over our foreign policy. The dispute is almost as disturbing as the war in Viet Nam itself.

Along with most Americans, we have read much on the subject, talked more and have been greatly perplexed.

We read an article last week by Vermont Royster, editor of the Wall Street Journal, which provides a most helpful analysis of the complex debate. (Somewhat beside the point, we take pride in the logic of Mr. Royster because he is a native of North Carolina and a graduate of Tennessee's famed Webb School at Bell Buckle.)

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HE NOTES that Sen. William Fulbright says much about the fighting in Viet Nam, none of which pleases President Johnson. But he points out that Sen. Fulbright also expresses concern over our policy elsewhere: In Cuba, the Dominicam Republic, on General DeGaulle, foreign aid, CIA practices, the Cold War.

He quotes Sen. Fulbright: "America is showing some signs of that fatal presumption, that over-extension of power and mission, which brought ruin to ancient Athens, to Napoleonic France and Nazi Germany."

Then Mr. Royster notes that Vice President Humphrey, who declares our diplomatic and military efforts are succeeding in Viet Nam, also extends his comments beyond the war scene.

He quotes Mr. Humphrey:

"Those who threaten their neighbors (anywhere) need to know that the United States will stay and see it through . . . The total application of our power and strength . . . is a part of our security structure."

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THEREAFTER, Mr. Royster writes:

"Mr. Fulbright can often sound querulous. . . . His judgment on practical questions isn't always impressive. Often he's just plain irritating.

"Nonetheless, the Senator is debating the questions a Senator should. And he is bringing to that debate the kind of provocative thought that you always hope for, seldom expect and rarely find in the public forum.

"So doing, he has forced those responsible for that policy to re-think the reasons for that policy and to put their plea for it in higher terms. They too—witness Vice President Humphrey—must raise the debate to a higher level. You can't answer the Fulbright questions with the same sort of retorts you use to peace marchers, muddled professors and unwashed undergraduates.

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"IF THERE'S A PITY in it, it's that this Senatorial task of probing, questioning and challenging should not have been undertaken by someone on the Republican side of the aisle. That task is the proper function of the Opposition; constructive, not destructive, for as Burke remarked: 'He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skills. Our antagonist is our helper.'

"Maybe at times the arguments are disruptive. But what better way to strengthen our nerves, as well as sharpen our skills, than a dialogue on the purpose, place and power of our nation in the world."

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